

Good snowy morning to all!

January 20, 2019

Some of you on my free range pastor mailing list have been receiving "Sunday words" and assorted mailings from me in the past. Some of you are new to receiving my words, as you are members of the congregation of the Federated Church in Thomaston. This snowy day has prompted me to want to begin again sending out some "Sunday words" most Sundays! If you would rather not be one of the receivers of these mailings, just send me an e-mail and I'll take your e-mail address off my receivers list. Lord knows, we all receive too many e-mails, texts, messages, etc., from too many sources we'd rather not receive!

For this morning, I'm thinking about Mary Oliver. Many of you have known her poetry for a long time. She died this past week at the age of 83. Mary Oliver wrote: "Instructions for living a life. Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it." And, "When it's over, I want to say: all my life I was a bride married to amazement...." And, "Why do people keep asking to see God's identity papers when the darkness opening into morning is more than enough?"

I didn't learn of Mary Oliver's poetry until I was in seminary in the late 90's. That discovery came after years of having no consideration of poetry at all. It just didn't interest me, I thought..... Then in my first New Testament class at Bangor Theological Seminary, Dr. Burton Throckmorton, my New Testament professor, shuffled back and forth in front of the class reciting these words of poet Denise Levertov, "Sometimes the mountains are hidden from me in veils of cloud, sometimes I am hidden from the mountain in veils of inattention, apathy, fatigue, when I forget or refuse to go down to the shore or a few yards up the road on a clear day, to reconfirm that witnessing presence." I was, to put it simply, transfixed. Burton threw out the poetry fishing line, and I was hooked from that day forward. The power of the poet to put into few words a lifetime and lifeline of meaning is one of the great mysteries and ministries of living to me.

Mary Oliver's death this past week reminds me of the legacy each one of us has to those we leave behind when we die. I wonder today what my legacy will be? Do you wonder what yours will be? I invite you to think about that on this snowy, icy, windy cold day. Perhaps you'd want to put it to paper in a poetic form, or a sentence, or a paragraph..... Or, tell someone else your thoughts and ask for theirs over coffee or a glass of wine.

No church this morning at Federated, or in pretty much any other church in Maine today! All are welcome to join us next Sunday, January 27th at 9:30 for church. The Annual Meeting of the church will take place right after worship. That meeting was to have happened today. But, once again, January in Maine reminds us that we are not in charge of very much in the greater scheme of nature and life.....

Stay warm and dry today, if you can, and give thanks for the likes of Mary Oliver and Denise Levertov and all the poets who remind us of our small and exquisite place in this wild and ornery life we share.

Blessings, Susan